

# **More Than You'll Ever Know**

*True Love and Some Other  
Stuff - II*

**MsPerception427**

## More Than You'll Ever Know by MsPerception427

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**Summary:**

Richie was having a bad day. And he blamed it all on his friends for coming back into his life and filling his head with nonsense like he was important and he was loved. He especially blamed his boyfriend, the same boyfriend he hadn't heard from all day except for a good morning text sent at the wrong damn time. Because Eddie was home in New York while Richie was on the opposite coast performing the final show of his three month long tour. Alone. On his birthday.

Aka Richie is alone and sad on his birthday. The Losers take care of that.

# 1. Chapter 1

## Author's Note:

Soo... apparently I made a sequel to my other story without realizing that's what I was doing. I am not even surprised. So here we go! Me projecting my self-esteem and anxiety issues on one of my favorites again!

Richie Tozier was having a bad day. That shouldn't be surprising given the mess his life was prior to his trip home but two years after defeating the psychotic child-murdering space clown from their nightmares had given him a certain expectation. A belief that life wasn't a giant bag of crap. He decided at that moment that this was all Ben's fault. Oh, and Mike. Yeah, this was all their fault. Those ridiculously gorgeous, sweet-natured assholes wormed their way back into Richie's heart and started filling it with nonsense like he was loved and cared about and deserved good things. Then again, it wasn't fair to blame just them. The rest of the Losers had done a really good job of that too. Especially Eddie... his boyfriend.... The same boyfriend that he hasn't heard from aside from a quick good morning text sent at the wrong damn time because Eddie was home in New York while Richie was on the opposite side of the country performing the final show of his three-month-long tour across the United States. In Seattle... on his birthday.

So yeah, Richie is pretty certain he's having an awful day and it's all his friends' fault. If they had just left him to drift the way he had been since high school ended, he would've been fine. But no, they filled his head with hope and love and now as he was entering the final tour stop on his 42nd birthday, he was stuck wondering why they even bothered.

He knew he was a lot. He's known that since birth. His parents tried the best they could but he was too much, too loud. He was a gay child living in a repressed homophobic community dealing with depression, anxiety and ADHD years before any reputable (or not so reputable) research would come along on the subject. So they tried but they didn't know how to deal with their son. They couldn't cope.

So they ignored him. Any celebration of his birthday fell on the remaining Losers. Until one day even that number dwindled. Until it was his eighteenth birthday and it was just Mike and Stan left. Stan who got accepted to a school in New York. Stan who would leave at the end of the summer and forget him just like Bev, Bill, Ben... Eddie. Richie was so damn tired of being left behind and forgotten. So he left first. He tried to remember Mike and Stan but he forgot less than a week after leaving Derry.

With his childhood forgotten, Richie went back to spending his birthday alone. Or in his later years drugged up and drunk. It worked. It passed the time. But then Derry happened again. They killed the clown, reignited some ancient friendship bonds and pretty much ensured that Richie would never be alone again. Until he was... today. His birthday.

Richie was fully aware he was being ridiculous. He could easily pick up the phone and call any one of the Losers. They all probably had really great reasons why they hadn't called or texted yet. He glanced at his phone to see that their main chat was still quiet. The only texts were yet another sunrise picture from Mike from whatever city he and Bill were in now along with the usual thumbs-up emoji and heart eyes from Stan and Bill respectively. Then nothing. So they weren't just ignoring Richie at least. That made him feel slightly less awful.

He was just going to ignore the little voice in his head reminding him that there were alternate group chats in their circle. He knew for a fact that Eddie, Stan, and Bev had one, specifically about him because Bev and Stan were even bigger mother hens about him than Eddie was. Which was surprising only in how much it wasn't that surprising. To be fair, Richie also had side chats with him, Mike and Ben as well as one with just Stan. So he refused to read too much into this... anymore. He was going to stop. Like right now.

Thankfully, a knock on his dressing room door stopped him before he could spiral any further into the "all my friends secretly hate me and my boyfriend is probably moving out as we speak and taking our fur children with him" headspace that they all tried to bring him out of on a semi-constant basis. He looked up from his still silent phone to tell his visitor they could come in. A second later the door opened revealing the mass of jet black curls that were attached to his brand

new manager, Gina King. Her dark eyes lit up as she caught sight of him.

“How’s my favorite birthday boy?” Gina asked sliding into the room with a wide smile on her face. Despite his heavy thoughts, Richie felt himself smiling in return.

When he announced that he wanted to start writing his own material as well as come out, he was met with scorn from his prior manager, Scott. The other Losers naturally had feelings about that. They encouraged him to be brave but also to work with someone who recognized that he had his own talent and didn’t need ghostwriters to make him funny. It took some serious convincing and an intervention staged by Eddie, Stan, and Bev that stemmed exclusively from their group chat before Richie finally felt confident enough to let go of his toxic and clearly homophobic manager. He hadn’t even signed the deal that would formally end their business together before Bill was introducing him to Gina.

Gina was a breath of fresh air. She was no-nonsense but had a wicked streak of humor. Most importantly, she did her homework on him. She knew his work before and after he started working with Scott and she had no qualms telling him on the first meeting that his old work was clearly superior. She helped handle his coming out, booking him only on shows he felt comfortable with like Ellen, Seth Meyers, and Fallon. She had his back but never coddled him. She was the best thing that ever happened to his career.

“Just the usual pre-show jitters,” Richie admitted as she stood behind him, placing her hands on his shoulders. He leaned into the embrace, closing his eyes for a moment and just savoring being next to someone who actually cared about him for a moment. After a minute, he opened his eyes to meet her gaze in the mirror. “You got the hotel info? I came straight here and I’m exhausted. I figure I’ll get a good night’s sleep and head out in the morning.”

“So soon?” Gina asked, a frown pulling at her lips. “I talked to Eddie and he seemed to believe that you would love to explore Seattle. I was thinking that maybe you could stay a little while. You don’t have anything pressing until next week. I was thinking maybe a few extra days in Seattle. Kind of like a vacation?”

Richie felt a twitch in his heart at the mention of his boyfriend or maybe ex-boyfriend because he was probably moving his stuff out because he was tired of Richie and his everything. He was definitely taking their Pomeranian, appropriately named Penny, and their Maine coon kitten with the grouchiest expression, Little Stan. Their beloved fur children would happily follow Eddie. Richie was hardly ever home to raise them anyway. Another reason Eddie was probably done with him. It was Richie who insisted on adopting the kitten the day they found Penny at the shelter. And then he went on tour a few months later. He probably had Bill and Mike helping him out. Ben and Bev on standby with their boat to make sure he could get away smoothly. He'd probably go stay with Stan and Patty until he found a new place. Or maybe he would just move away entirely. Make a clean break from Richie. Maybe they all would. And oops, looks like he tumbled into that headspace after all.

"Maybe another time. I'm tired," Richie said, quietly. "I just want to go home."

Gina nodded, meeting his gaze through the mirror. "If you're sure." She reached into her pocket and held out a hotel key. She pressed the key into his hand, squeezing lightly. "That's for your hotel. It's the Four Seasons. Penthouse with an amazing view of the city."

"Bit pricey for one night, isn't it?"

Gina smirked. "In case you haven't noticed, Mr. Hot Shot Comedian, you can afford it. Besides you deserve only the best on your special night."

Richie snorted. "Okay, I guess. But it's just one night, Gina. I really just want to go home, sleep for a week and be a normal human for a bit."

"There was a part missing about sexing your very hot boyfriend but I know it's pretty much just implied at this point," Gina rolled her eyes, reminding him of Stan. He swallowed the lump in his throat. She squeezed his shoulders lightly. "I'll get you a flight for tomorrow afternoon then?"

"Yeah, that should work," Richie murmured. "Thanks for looking out

for me, Gi.”

“I know that look. What’s going on?” Gina asked, sliding her hands down his shoulders and resting her head against his. “You’ve got your thinking face on. And not the fun one where you cause mayhem for people that are not me. This is the bad thought face. What’s wrong?”

“It’s just... I’m tired, Gi,” Richie sighed.

For a brief moment, Richie caught an emotion somewhere between regret and concern flash on Gina’s face before she covered it. She opened her mouth, clearly about to say something when she abruptly shook her head. Instead, she gave him a tight hug and a kiss on the cheek.

“Never you worry, Richie baby. You’re going to have some well earned time off soon. That should get you all sorted out.”

Richie managed to nod and feign enthusiasm until Gina was called out of the room by one of the PAs. It wasn’t that he didn’t love the woman. He did. She was practically an honorary Loser at this point. And she was a miracle worker for his career. He was terrified he was going to have to start from the bottom all over again following his pre-Derry disaster show. But Gina cleaned it all up, let him be his true self and cared about him even when he was drunkenly sobbing his way through a hibachi dinner in Nebraska because he missed his friends.

So it went without saying that he loved Gina. But he was tired and he was cranky. He loved how much she helped his career. But that’s also where the exhaustion came in. He had been gone for three months. Three months of only FaceTime phone calls and texts. He had seen his friends a handful of times during the course of the tour when he stopped in a city near them but they all had their own lives. Responsibilities that they had to take care of. They couldn’t just beg off from work and life to watch their friend make awful jokes simply because he was a codependent asshole who needed them more than he needed air.

He shook off his melancholy mood and started to get ready for the show. Gina already had his wardrobe picked out. It was a little nicer

than what he had been rocking the whole tour but he chalked it up to this being the last show before his two or so months break before turning around and getting ready to leave home (Eddie) again and going back on tour.

Richie was sitting down in his chair contemplating the meaning of life when his phone rang, startling him from his thoughts. The first hints of a smile formed when he saw it was a group video call. He accepted and felt his heart grow at least a size as the room was filled with the most chaotic version of Happy Birthday he ever heard. Clearly, they had made no real plan on how they were singing or even what version of the song they were singing. Harmony was nothing they ever heard of before either. It was bizarre but so totally them that Richie couldn't help but burst into tears.

*“ Uh... Rich? ”*

*“ Richie?! ”*

*“Oh, Richie. Babe, what's going on?”*

*“Oh no, oh no. He's actually crying. Holy shit, we broke Richie. On his birthday!”*

*“Richie, sweetie, are you okay?! Ben, calm down. He's not broken. I think. Shit, Richie?!”*

*“ Who do I need to kill? Twitter? Is it Twitter again? I told you I will find a way to do it! ”*

Richie choked on a sob that doubled for a laugh at the random outburst from his best friend. Stan was staring straight into the camera with a steely glare that showed he was serious.

*“No need to find a way to fight a social media network, Stan the Man. It's no one, really... just... me.”*

*“ Guys, we'll call you back ,”* Eddie said definitely. There were a few grumbles but soon everyone was gone but Eddie. Big brown eyes stared back at him with patience, understanding and even love. It made it even harder for Richie to reel the emotions back down. *“ Talk to me, sweetheart. What's going on? ”*



And Richie must've looked like a hot mess if Eddie was using the suitable for work pet names. He sniffled, trying to gather his thoughts. His brow furrowed. He knew every inch of the apartment he lived in with Eddie. And nothing about where he was looked familiar. It was almost 10 o'clock in New York. That was pretty much Eddie's bedtime. Anytime he called around this time, he was already curled up in bed in his ridiculous pajamas with Penny and Little Stan. So that begged the question of...

"Where are you? You're not at home? Where are our children?"

Eddie's eyes widened as he looked first at the plain nondescript wall behind him and then to something slightly off-camera. Finally, his wide eyes centered on the screen again.

*"Uh, uh, I'm uh, just out. Met up with some people for a drink. Nothing big. Caroline from next door is checking in with the kids. They're fine. Relax. Also stop trying to distract me from what's important. What's happening? Why are you crying? Talk to me, please."*

"I... don't even know. I'm just so tired lately."

*"Have you been getting enough sleep? I know you're not staying out late and partying. Gina told me you've been acting like a grandpa and heading home after every show. Which I've told you that you don't have to do. But ... wait, Rich is this... are you having nightmares again?"*

Richie didn't bother to lie. It rarely ever worked with Eddie anyway. And if he thought Richie was lying to him, he would consult with Bev and Stan, who were apparently the group's self-declared Richie translators. So in the interest of not dragging this out even longer, Richie simply nodded.

"Yeah. I... the nightmares have been pretty bad lately. It's all the stuff from the deadlights with some extra bonus stuff. Because now even Gina and Patty are in there. And I don't know why. I didn't even know them back then. But they're happening so more often. And I can't turn it off. I think because I haven't seen any of you in like a month. And I wake up in a panic because you're not there. And I can't sleep anymore."

*“Oh, Rich... why didn't you say something?”*

“Because I fucking miss you all so much and I hate that I do,” Richie admitted, well aware that he was bordering on crying. Again.

“I’ve been on my own since I was eighteen. I should be okay not living out of your back pocket or seeing you all every week but I’m not. I’m miserable and tired. And I didn’t want to tell you all because then you would feel like you had to come here and I don’t want to be a burden on everyone because I’m whiny and codependent. Bev dealt with the deadlights for twenty-seven years without us. I should be able to do it too. I’ll be home tomorrow. So it’s not a big deal. I’ll be fine. Never mind what I just said. It’s okay. So who are you meeting for a drink?”

Eddie let out a small sound that was a cross between a whimper and a scream. God, he loved that weirdo. “*What the fuck...?*” Eddie finally murmured. His eyes going to something away from his phone for just a moment and then he was focusing all his doe sized heart eyes on Richie.

*“Richard Tozier, you have never and will never be a burden to me or to any of the Losers. Spending time with you is not a struggle we have to endure. Quite the opposite really. We all love you so much. You don’t have to feel bad about asking us for things. We want to do things for you. You wouldn’t hesitate to go to one of Bev’s fashion shows or Bill’s book signings, so why do you think they wouldn’t want to do the same for you?”*

Richie shrugged. Realistically, he knew what Eddie was saying made sense. They had always been weirdly codependent children and it only made sense given their childhood and adult trauma that they would be codependent adults as well. He knew that in his heart. But his head told him that he didn’t deserve it. That he never deserved it. His head told him that it wasn’t real and that it was just another vision from the deadlights.

*“Rich, I wish I could make you see the way we all see you. I know how your brain works. And I know that the deadlights didn’t help. But Bev dealt with the deadlights on her own for twenty-seven years because that asshole clown separated us. We’re together again. That means we’re going*

*to deal with the deadlights together.”*

Richie gave a small nod but couldn't stop the tears from coming. Eddie made that sound again before touching the screen as if he could somehow reach Richie through the phone. His lips pressed into a tight line and then he was looking away from the phone again.

*“ That’s it. I’m done. This was a stupid idea! This is why no one but Richie actually ever listens to Stan. ”*

*“ Literally said that from the beginning! No one should listen to bird boy over there! ”* Another voice that sounded so much like Beverly shouted before the line went dead.

Richie was still staring at his phone in confusion when the dressing room door suddenly slammed open and he was wrapped up in what felt like no less than three different pairs of arms. He took a deep breath and smelled sunshine, strawberries, leather and the really expensive aftershave Eddie loved so much but Richie thought smelled like hand sanitizer.

“Bev? Ben? Eddie?!” Richie managed to detangle himself from the human tangle of limbs to stare incredulously at his friends. “What? How?!”

“We were here to surprise you but then tears and nope!” Ben said, pulling away long enough to deliver that nonsensical train of words and then Richie was being hugged tightly again. He felt Bev's hands running through his hair while Ben's arms wrapped tighter around his shoulders. Eddie was in front of him, holding Richie's face against his stomach, completely unconcerned with the tears soaking through his clothes.

“I don't understand. What are you three doing here?” his voice pleasantly muffled. He sniffled, burying his face further into Eddie.

“So it's not just them.”

Richie turned the best he could while sitting in his makeup chair and still wrapped in a three-way embrace to see a very sheepish looking Stan, Mike and Bill standing in the doorway. They each gave a little

wave in his direction. Stan gave a small shrug when his eyes met Richie's, though his lips twitched downward at the sight of Richie's distress.

"Buh... what??"

"Happy Birthday, Rich!" Mike cheered, clearly ignoring Richie's gawking confusion.

"How are you all here?"

"It's called vacation time, dork," Stan explained, rolling his eyes. "Well, it's vacation time for me and Eddie. Ben and Bev barely work these days. They're still on the world's longest honeymoon. It's gross. But still less gross than Mike and Bill. Bill can write from anywhere so he just follows Mike on his travels across the country. I'm starting to realize you're all kind of sickening."

Mike draped an arm around Bill, who flushed and shook his head at them all. "It's true. Also, don't talk about how we're sickening. You're the same guy that won't stop gushing about how 'perfect and beautiful' his wife is as she carries their children every single day."

"Okay, but Patty is perfect and beautiful and literally incubating two human beings and therefore deserves all the praise. So fuck off, Michael," Stan retorted, with no actual heat. Mike blew him a kiss in response. Richie huffed out a laugh but couldn't shake off his confusion.

"I don't get it why are you...?"

Eddie reached up to cup Richie's face in his hands. "Gina said you've been a little off lately. And we knew this was the last show of the tour and your birthday. Honestly, we've been planning this trip for a while now but it seemed more important than ever to get here."

"Eddie and I wanted to tell you straight away," Bev chimed in, her voice accusatory. "But Stan thought it would be a great idea to surprise you."

"And Bill backed Stan so of course Mike sided with Bill and Ben couldn't make a decision so we had to go with the majority," Eddie

glared at said majority. "And look, it was the wrong damn choice!"

"Mistakes were made," Stan shrugged. Though he was feigning flippancy, Richie could still read the concern in Stan's eyes. He threw a small smile at his best friend that had Stan unclenching just a little. "So anyway, we talked to Gina and she got us the penthouse suite. So we're going to be playing tourist for a week."

Richie swallowed. "Oh... that's... Wait, Stan... what about Patty?"

"Hey, Richie," Patty's voice reached him before her head was poking around the corner. A brilliant smile stretched across her face. Her hand resting on her still small but definitely more noticeable than the last time Richie saw her belly. "Happy Birthday!"

Richie nodded before once again dissolving into sobs. He heard them all let out gasps before he found himself surrounded by his friends. His family. Eddie was pressed against his front and the only one that was able to look him in the eye.

"I don't know what to do here. I thought having us here would help," Eddie said fretfully.

Rich shook his head, leaning so his forehead rested against Eddie's. "It does. It's helping so much. These are happy tears, I swear."

"They better be, Tozier. Also, the offer still stands," Stan laughed while tousling Richie's curls. The comedian grumbled and dodged away from his best friend's grabby hands the best he could while still sitting and wrapped up in the Losers.

"You're a little troll, you know that?"

"Only for you, Rich. Only for you." Stan leaned up and pressed a messy kiss to Richie's cheek. "Happy Birthday, Loser."

The rest of them chorused Stan's words while sneaking in hugs and kisses of their own until it was just Eddie. His Eddie. The same Eddie he got to hug and kiss and love openly with no consequences. The same Eddie who loved him enough to rally the troops and fly across the country.

"I love you," Richie whispered.

"Love you too," Eddie replied, lips curling up. "Always."

Richie fought the blush that he knew was spreading against his best efforts and kissed his boyfriend. Just an hour ago, he thought this man was so sick of him that he was going to leave. And in reality, he was planning on surprising him with all of their friends. Richie promised himself at that moment that he would work even harder to finally believe he was worth all the love that Eddie was freely throwing his way.

"Knock knock!"

Richie pulled away from Eddie to throw an incredulous stare at his manager. "It is 2019! I thought we were past the knock-knock when we enter doors schtick. "

"You know who does that? A woman who has been scarred by walking in on you two in your dressing room one too many times!"

"Literally everyone is here. Why would be doing anything indecent?!"

"Really? You do remember Bev and Ben's wedding six months ago? Because we all do," Bill drawled. Richie glared in his direction while Eddie turned various shades of red.

"Billy, I wouldn't go throwing 40 something repressed queer stones at glass windows if I were you. I also remember Ben and Bev's wedding but it wasn't Eddie and Richie that almost got kicked out by the venue staff," Stan countered, crossing his arms over his chest with a smirk. Bill and Mike exchanged glances before finding the tips of their shoes to be very interesting. Stan winked in Richie's direction.

"I've said it before and I'll say it again, your friend group is super weird," Gina laughed, taking them all in. She shook her head once again before beaming at Richie. "Glad to see you looking better already. I wanted to tell you everything earlier. You looked so sad. I almost spilled the beans then."

"I actually owe you a thank you. Thanks for getting them all here."

“Anything for my favorite client,” Gina grinned. “Now I’m going to escort your family to their seats. You’re going to take a minute and get it together so you can crush it. And then enjoy your well-earned vacation in Seattle. Oh and aside from a single meeting in LA next week, you’re off until the end of the summer. And no more shows until the end of the year.”

“Really?” Richie couldn’t hide the optimism and happiness in his voice.

“Yes, really. But no slacking when you’re back. I need you to bring your A-game between August and November. You’re going to need that and so much more while working on new material for your Netflix specials.”

Richie paused, happy to note that the rest of the Losers looked equally confused. “What Netflix specials?”

“Oh,” Gina said, feigning confusion though the grin spreading across her face gave her away. “Did I forget to mention that the meeting next week is you signing a contract for a six special deal with Netflix? It took some finagling but all the specials need to be filmed either in New York or LA. Netflix was surprisingly okay with that stipulation.”

“Are you serious right now?!” Richie felt tears welling again. Was there seriously no end to this? “I don’t have to... I don’t have to tour anymore?”

“No more touring until you’re ready. If you’re ready,” Gina promised. “You earned this, Richie. I don’t want you to think I did anything other than to tell them where the specials should be held. Netflix has been after you since you were on Fallon. This was all you.”

Richie didn’t even know the tears were falling again until Eddie was stepping aside to let Gina approach him. She wiped the tears with the pad of her thumbs. Richie was happy to note that she also had tears in her eyes.

“You are one of the most genuinely talented people I know, Richie Tozier. And I’m so glad I get to work with you and help the world see that,” Gina smiled brightly. “I know that some seriously weird shit

went down recently that brought you all back together and changed you and I know that I'll probably never know the full story. But I get enough of it to know that you deserve this. You earned this."

Richie looked up to see his friends all nodding with wide smiles. His friends, his losers. Against all odds, they somehow did it. They found each other again. They killed the clown that separated them in the first place. And then they kept each other. They fit back into each other's lives so seamlessly that Richie forgot that had only been about two years since they beat Pennywise for good. Two years that he got to end almost every night on a FaceTime call with Stan and Bev (with occasional input from Eddie, Patty, and Ben) arguing over the most inane things just because they could. Two years that he got to crawl into bed with the man he's been in love with for most of his life and wake up to a dog sprawl across them and a cat butt in his face. His ideal morning. Almost two years since his life changed for the better.

"Are you all trying to make me cry or just getting lucky?" Richie asked, laughing slightly as Gina tried to catch his latest round of tears.

"We're just trying to make sure you get it in your head that we love you," Ben countered with a smirk. "The tears are an extra bonus."

"Old age has made you soft, Rich," Stan teased, clearly ignoring that he was clearly crying as well. Stupid soft ass best friend being proud of his accomplishments.

"Alright, that's enough," Gina cut in before Richie could retort. "I'm going to escort your family to their seats where they were supposed to be waiting to surprise you. You're going to take a deep breath, get it together and then go out there and crush it like you always do."

"Thanks, Gi."

"Anytime, Rich," she whispered, standing on tiptoe to place a gentle kiss on his forehead. "Anytime."

Richie watched as the others filed out of the room, still bickering about who even knew at that point but clearly still buzzing with



happiness. Happiness for him. He couldn't stop smiling as he finished changing and getting ready to go out. This really was shaping up to the best birthday he's ever had. He couldn't imagine anything more perfect than this.

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Eddie watched as Richie shed his earlier angst the second he walked on stage. To the people that didn't know him best, there was absolutely nothing wrong. He was light-hearted and fun. He had the audience in the palm of his hand the moment he opened his mouth. Richie was a natural. And he was so much more authentic now that he was writing his own stuff. Authentic and genuinely hilarious. Eddie wasn't lying when he told Richie that going to his shows was a pleasure now. Richie was so funny when he was being honest and being himself and now the whole world got to see it. And for the most part, the world liked what they were seeing.

Sure there was some backlash and negativity when Richie came out. There was a reason Stan wanted to fight Twitter besides being weird enough to think that he actually could fight the Internet. But the Losers shielded Richie from the most toxic of it all and fought for him when they could. There were many a BuzzFeed article written about the overprotective Gen X group that suddenly cliqued up and fought people for one another. The internet found the story of a group of successful adults who found each other again to be adorable and heartwarming. They each had an influx of followers once it was known that they knew each other. It's what happens when most of the group is rich and famous.

But all that was to say that Richie was a natural performer. He was at home on the stage. He held the audience's attention with joke after joke. The only way Eddie knew he hadn't completely shaken off his earlier mood was in the way his eyes would seek out Eddie's during the show. Eddie made it a point to laugh the loudest in those moments. The blinding smile he got in return made it worth it.

As the show neared its conclusion, Eddie spotted Gina sticking her head around the corner. She gave him a thumbs up. Good. Now for the real surprise of the evening. They didn't mean to reveal their presence so early. Richie was meant to get on stage and see them there. But Ben had a point, incoherent as it was. Richie wasn't meant

to be sad. True none of the Losers were happy if one of them was sad. But it was different with Richie. His pain hurt them all. He spent so long trying to take care of them, masking his own pain that they were all determined to fix any way they could. That's why they abandoned their original plan to hug the daylights out of Richie when he was crying.

Well, temporarily abandoned. After Gina disappeared behind the curtain Stan and Eddie slipped out of their seats. He could feel Richie's confused eyes on them but his rapid-fire delivery never faltered. God, he really loved that man. The weighted box in his jacket pocket seemed that much heavier as he and Stan made their way to where Gina was waiting. He had been carrying this box around since long before Bev and Ben's wedding. He knew it was meant to be but he just didn't know if the time was right. He glanced over his shoulder as he left the auditorium and met Richie's gaze. Though he was wearing a mildly puzzled reaction, Richie still threw him a real smile that had Eddie smiling back. He patted his jacket again. Yeah, maybe it was time after all.

"You going to do it tonight?" Stan asked, eyes dropping to Eddie's jacket.

"That depends. Who has what in the pool I know you idiots have going on?"

Stan grinned. "Bill and Ben have Richie asking on your anniversary. Bev is riding on you asking on your anniversary. Mike has you asking tonight."

"And you?"

"You asking tonight in the most public way humanly possible. Anything to make sure he cries as many happy tears as possible," Stan's smirk turned almost feral. Eddie couldn't help but laugh.

He patted the ring in his jacket that had been there since shortly after he and Richie moved into together. He's known since he was twelve that it would always be them. He glanced at Gina who was standing close by holding the birthday cake they intended to present to Richie on stage. Her eyes were glistening and it was clear she was fully on

board with them deviating from the plan. Again.

“How much is the pool?”

“A thousand dollars, free babysitting duties for a year for the local Losers, and the ability to veto Bill’s book endings in the future.”

Eddie nodded. “Those sound like good terms to me. I want a cut, Uris.”

“Definitely, Tozier.”

“I didn’t ask him yet.”

“You will.”

“He hasn’t said yes.”

“He will.”

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And of course because Stan was an observant bastard who was occasionally (sparingly) right, Richie did say yes. And he totally cried in the happiest way possible.

## 2. The Proposal

### Summary for the Chapter:

In which I got prompted to write more, Eddie pops the question, Richie cries some tears and Stan may or may not legitimately fight Twitter.

### Notes for the Chapter:

So I got a suggestion from two lovely commenters and I had to add another piece on. I hope that this lives up to expectations. And thanks again to everyone who commented. They mean a lot even if I have brain farts and forget to respond back. Thanks!!

Eddie and Stan were gone. He knew they wouldn't leave before the show was over without good reason but that didn't mean that Richie wasn't immediately suspicious. It didn't help that Ben kept looking around as if he was expecting some kind of cue. God bless that beautiful bastard but he was definitely not the first of the Losers Richie would call if he needed to commit a crime. The man had not one duplicitous bone in his body. No, he would definitely call Stan, Bev or Eddie. Hence the reason he was feeling suspicious about Eddie and Stan leaving.

Richie looked out the corner of his eye for a sign of Gina. But his manager was nowhere to be found. Suspensions were growing. He didn't think they would do anything as awful as trying to embarrass him on stage... but then he remembered exactly who he was talking about. And yes, yes they would. That's exactly what they would do.

But it was also his birthday and he was working so whatever they were going to do couldn't be too terrible. At least he hoped. Gina seemed to be in on it at the very least. So it definitely wasn't going to be something so terrible that it ended his career. It was sad how low the bar was set for Richie these days.

"Thank you for coming out, ladies, gents and my enlightened in-betweens. I'm Trashmouth Tozier. Have a good night!"

He took a bow as the audience loudly clapped and hooted. He was used to the applause from his earlier shows but it felt better to see people genuinely happy at the end of his shows now. Because they were clapping at his words. He was his authentic self and people actually loved it. His gaze drifted to where the rest of the Losers were sitting. Or rather where they were supposed to be sitting. Somehow between the beginning of his closing and now, the others disappeared. His suspicions about Eddie and Stan leaving were at full-blown paranoia levels. And then.. it happened.

“Happy Birthday to you!”

Of course, they were doing this. Of course.

The lights in the auditorium dimmed and from the darkness emerged Mike and Ben carrying a large cake with two candles in the middle. The rest of their friends surrounded them, singing loudly and just as free of pitch and tone as before. Richie loved these idiots so much.

Soon the audience was singing along. He was aware of the people filming even as they sang along and couldn't help but blush. Once again he cursed the Losers. Before reuniting with them, he wasn't this easily emotional. He had numbed himself to everything. But now... he had these idiots back and that was the best drug out there. Even when they were continuing their quest to embarrass the shit out of him in front of his adoring audience.

As they finished singing to uproarious applause, Richie blew the candles out while rolling his eyes. They really got the numbers four and two on the damn cake. Although given who he was dealing with, he probably should've been happy that the assholes didn't actually put forty-two candles on his cake. His friends were giant dorks and he wouldn't change a thing about them. He also couldn't think of anything he could wish for. He had everything he ever wanted, everything he thought he could have already. There was nothing more he could even imagine that would top the perfection of this moment... or so he thought until he watched as his perfect, amazing boyfriend dropped to one knee on the stage. In front of everyone.

“Not that I don't love you on your knees, Eds, but what the fuck are you doing?”

“What the fuck does it look like, genius?” Eddie retorted with no real heat behind his words. If anything he just looked fondly exasperated.

“What it looks like and what it is are clearly two different things because you don’t even have a...” Richie trailed off as Eddie pulled a velvet-covered box from his jacket pocket. He flipped the top open to reveal a silver band. “A ring. Oh, fuck. You have a fucking ring. Oh fuck. This is happening. This is fucking happening.”

“The number of fucks already said and Eddie hasn’t even asked him yet!” Stan giggled from somewhere on the stage. For all Richie knew he could’ve been right next to him (he was). He didn’t know and he didn’t care. His sole focus was on the man and the ring in front of him.

“Eds, I...”

“Shh, you have to let me give the whole speech. Which I wasn’t going to do because this is your space and typically I respect that but Stan promised me a cut of the pool they totally did have if I made you cry in public. And there was some good stuff in there. So here we are. Prepare to cry a lot.”

Richie laughed softly, half aware of the tears already streaming down his face and the cameras that were filming and no doubt live-streaming. And he didn’t give a flying fuck because Eddie was proposing. The man he had been in love with since before he knew what love meant was actually proposing to him.

“Rich, you’re loud. You’re annoying. You’re still weirdly obsessed with jokes about fucking my dead mom. And ignoring what that fucking bogus InStyle award says, you have the fashion sense of a senile Floridian man,” Eddie started, tears shining in his own eyes. “And with every passing day, awful joke and seriously horrendous shirt I fall a little bit more in love with you. You’re all those things but so much more. You’re my other half. You’re the reason I can be brave enough to get on one knee to propose to you in front of the Losers and all these people. Because you deserve this and so much more.

You’re one of the most amazing people I know. You give so much to

all of us and refuse to accept that we would want to show you even a fraction of that in return. You're beautiful and everything I could imagine in a partner and more. You make me feel happy, safe and loved every day. And baby, you deserve it too. You deserve all the happiness this world has to give and I want to be the one to give you that. Every day for the rest of our lives. So, Richie 'Trashmouth' Tozier, will you marry me?"

Richie didn't bother to answer. He didn't think words would work anyway. Instead, he pulled Eddie up from his kneeling position so he could crush their mouths together and pour every ounce of what he was feeling into Eddie through his mouth. It was a terrible kiss. Both smiling and crying way too much to much more than breathe loudly against each other's lips. It was truly awful. It was the best kiss ever.

"As sweet as this is and don't get me wrong, it's super sweet, Richie, you never did answer the man's question," Bev teased, her voice finally breaking through the haze of *EddieEddieEddie* running rampant through Richie's brain. He pulled away to throw her a dirty look. She rolled her eyes, smiling brightly as she leaned further into Ben's arm tightly wound around her shoulders. Ben was openly crying. That damn adorable sap. Bev looked up at her husband with adoration and amusement. Richie shivered when he realized that would be him soon. Well, the husband part. Not the part about looking up. Eddie was definitely the one looking up to him.

"Richie?" Eddie asked, noticing his mind was drifting. But he didn't sound upset. He never did. He was always patient, sometimes amused when Richie's brain did it's wandering. He accepted Richie for who he was. Loved him for who he was and never asked him to change. How knew the answer to this question before he even knew it would be a question.

"Yes," Richie whispered, turning back to Eddie.

"Yeah?" Eddie repeated as if there was ever any response other than yes that Richie was going to give.

"Yeah," he answered anyway, kissing Eddie's nose. He smiled brightly as Eddie scrunched his nose up in response. "Yes," another kiss to his right cheek. "Yes," a kiss to the left cheek. "Yes," one on

the forehead. “Yes,” this one whispered against Eddie’s lips. “I can’t wait to marry you. I’ve loved you my whole life.”

“I know,” Eddie replied, his hands coming up to stroke Richie’s cheeks. “Sorry, it took me so long to catch up. But I’m here and I can’t wait to spend the rest of my life with you. I love you, Rich.”

“I love you too, Eds. I love you so fucking much.” Richie laughed tearfully even as their friends’ laughter and applause were drowned out by the audience. Right, the people who paid to see Richie tell jokes but apparently also got a front seat to his proposal.

“I can’t believe you let Stan talk you into doing this just to make me cry in public.”

“I can’t believe that you knew it would be Stan that caved first in trying to sway one of us to go along with the pool,” Eddie sighed, hugging Richie closer and rocking them gently. Richie hummed, burying his face on Eddie’s shoulder. “You two are truly codependent.”

“It’s part of the Losers package, baby,” Richie shrugged. “We’re stuck together for life. A side effect of letting Bill cut us with broken glass and bind us together as children in a weird blood oath ritual.”

“That’s not w-w-what... that’s not how it fucking happened, Richie!”

“It really is though,” the others countered in unison.

Bill sulked retreating into the embrace Mike was offering him despite the laughter that had him practically doubled over. Stan was rolling his eyes and thinking he was hiding the fact that he was also smiling behind a very amused Patricia’s head but they knew him well enough. Bev and Ben were snickering adorably into one another. And Eddie was here with his arms wrapped around Richie, holding him like he was some precious thing that Eddie couldn’t live without. Which apparently was the case. Eddie proposed to him. Eddie wanted to marry him.

What the actual fuck?

The audience was starting to trickle out now that the excitement was



over. Gina, in her infinite kindness, wisdom, and experience of wrangling seven sugar high forty something-year-olds, was handing out slices of the forgotten cake to anyone that wanted any. That was good. Richie was far too tired to deal with any of his friends hopped up on sugar.

Honestly, he was just too tired to deal with anything period. All those sleepless nights were starting to catch up as the adrenaline of his last show wore off. Having his friends all around was also helping him feel less on guard, leaving the bone-deep exhaustion nothing to hold it back. Richie yawned, feeling warmed as Eddie tightened his arms in response. He was reasonably sure Eddie was pretty much the only reason he was standing at this point.

“Tired?”

“Yeah, it’s been a long day,” Richie admitted, pulling back to meet his boyfriend, wait nope, his *fiancé’s* gaze. “Long month honestly.”

“Yeah, I bet. Want to head back to the hotel?” Eddie asked, cupping his cheek. Richie leaned into the touch, closing his eyes for a brief moment.

“I do. But you guys should go out. See the sights. Don’t let me hold you back.”

“Rich, you honestly think we’re going to go out on your birthday... your *engagement* night... without you?” Mike scoffed. “No, let’s pick up some beer and some take out and celebrate the way forty plus-year-olds are supposed to.”

“Booze, food and Disney+?” Ben asked, with a smirk.

“Booze, food and Disney+!” Bev cheered.

“You guys are weirdly obsessed with Disney,” Patty said, as they made their way to the exit. Richie trusted Eddie and Bev who appeared on his free side to guide him to the door.

“We’re weirdly obsessed with Disney? Who was the one who threatened to cut her own husband because he refused to go on the teacups for the fifth time? In a row?” Eddie asked, incredulously.

"You said a lot of not so friendly things in the happiest place on earth," Bill added, solemnly. Patty narrowed her eyes. "But also Stan is a jerk and he should've ridden the damn teacups." Patty grinned.

Richie rolled his eyes and let the conversation wash over him. Gina wasn't wrong. His friend group was super weird and definitely not okay. He wouldn't trade these weirdos for anything in the world.

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They were five episodes into what was shaping up to be a *Gargoyles* binge session when Bill's phone started ringing. It was a mutual agreement that when they were together phones were off unless it was to talk to spouses or ex-spouses in Bill's case. But Patty was with them and Audra was supposedly filming in Tokyo and therefore unable to make the trip, so no one should be calling. And yet...

"Audra? What's going on? Shouldn't you be on set right now?" Bill asked, pulling the phone away from his ear as Audra yelled something that Richie couldn't quite make out. Bill's face made a complicated series of expressions before he finally placed the phone down on the coffee table and turned it to speakerphone. "Okay, okay, okay, you're on."

"Great !" Audra exclaimed. " *First off, Happy Birthday, Rich. I wish I was there.* "

"Wish you were too," Richie replied honestly. "You were missed. These morons can't sing in harmony to save their lives."

" *I bet. Just remember as bad as they were, they actually practiced. And I was the poor unfortunate soul that had to suffer through it.* "

"Thank you for your sacrifice," Richie laughed as the others grumbled. "So not that I don't adore hearing from my favorite best friend's ex-wife but what's up?"

" *Trashmouth, you adorable bastard. I'm the only ex-wife you'll ever enjoy hearing from. I doubt Patty is letting go of Stanley anytime soon.* "

"Nope, these spawn are his and I'm not taking care of them alone," Patty declared from where she was happily sprawled across Stan.

*“Benverly is never-ending.”*

“Damn straight!” Bev agreed, earning a snicker from Ben.

*“ And we all know the only other ex-wife in this circle was far less delightful when her husband suddenly declared that he was in love with his childhood friend who was also very male and kindly needed a divorce so they could make it happen. ”*

They all laughed but it was true. Myra, predictably, did not handle knowing that Eddie was completely serious about ending their marriage. It was thanks to Bev’s foresight in filming the showdown that Eddie’s divorce went through as fast as it did with minimal alimony needing to be paid. Bill’s divorce was a cakewalk compared to what Eddie went through and only slightly less emotional than Bev’s.

Audra took the fact that her husband wanted out of their marriage after reconnecting with his childhood friends well. She even took the fact that he connected a little too much with one with grace. She admitted that their marriage had been over for a while and was all for ending it. She just wanted to know what led to Bill finally realizing it. So they told her everything. She gave Mike and Bill her full blessing and support and signed the papers the very next day. She really was the only ex that any of them wanted to keep in touch with.

“Okay, valid point. But why are you yelling at Bill on this the day of my birth?”

*“ Your birthday was officially over half an hour ago, ” Audra retorted. “ And the reason I’m yelling at Bill was that he was supposed to keep me updated on any and all the important things that happened on this trip since I couldn’t make it. And I trusted that adorable blue-eyed liar. So imagine my utter surprise to open Twitter this morning and see that ‘Reddie Engagement ’ is trending !”*

“What?!” Richie squawked, scrambling for his phone, dimly aware of the others doing the same.

While they were in their phone free bubble, the news of his

engagement was breaking. There was already a damn BuzzFeed article about it. Did these people never sleep?! Several sites had pictures and videos from the actual proposal already posted with articles pending.

“Oh my god,” Richie whispered.

“Oh my god,” Eddie echoed.

“I swear I will end Twitter if this goes bad,” Stan promised.

*“ There’s that endearing psychotic attitude I miss so much, ” Audra laughed. “ Seriously, it’s not as bad as you’re probably imagining. So far it’s all actually pretty tame and adorable. I’m sure the ignorant will wake up soon and have something to say. You can fight them then, Stanley. Keep me updated! But I have to go now but congratulations again you two. I better be invited to the wedding. ”*

“Of course you’re invited,” Eddie and Richie replied in unison. Audra laughed again, exchanging more goodbyes with the Losers and then hanging up.

“So...” Richie said, looking down at his phone. He could feel his face heating up and the shame that he tried to bury creeping over him. He wasn’t ashamed to be gay. He was out and he was proud. But this... this was different. He tried to keep his relationship with Eddie private. He wasn’t a celebrity. He wasn’t someone who wanted to be in the public’s eye. This was literally the worst possible...

“Hey,” Eddie murmured, cutting through the self-deprecation already taking hold. “Rich, I was the one that proposed in front of everyone. I knew this would probably happen. It’s okay.”

“If anything this is all Stan’s fault for trying to tip the scales in his favor,” Bev said, stretching over to touch Richie’s hand. “Remember when in doubt we blame Bill and if that fails we blame Stan.”

“Wait, what?!” Bill yelped.

“So much of our childhood makes sense now,” Stan murmured.

“You sure you’re okay with this?” Richie asked softly, ignoring his

friends and their random. “People are going to read about it.” *People are going to know.*

“Richie, everyone knows we’re together. I go with you to all your major red carpet things. You tweet your undying love for me every morning. It was only a matter of time before the press found out we were engaged. As for it being all over the place, well it’s just part of being engaged to the hottest gay comedian on the scene.” Richie sniffled. “I love you, Trashmouth. Buzzfeed articles, Twitter fights, codependency issues with Stan and all.”

“Okay.”

“Okay?”

“Yeah, okay,” Richie sighed, settling back onto Eddie’s chest.

Eddie’s arms folded around him once again and he could feel Bev and Ben scooching into the space left beside them. The two couples were tangled together on the king-sized pullout sofa while Mike and Bill occupied the love seat to their right and Stan and Patty were curled in an armchair. Stan’s legs were propped up on the end of the sofa and periodically knocked into Richie’s feet to keep him grounded.

“I love you, Rich,” Eddie murmured against his temple. Richie smiled, pressing a kiss to Eddie’s chest.

“Love you too, Spaghetti, I love you too.”

*Gargoyles* went forgotten as his friends (mostly Stan with a little bit of Bev) decided to go through the tweets up so far. Richie was certain that they were purposely skimming over the less than pleasant ones but he didn’t care. He let the voices of the people he cared about the most in the world wash over him as he sank into a much-needed sleep. Their gentle teasing and mocking of some of the tweets was background noise to the feeling of being safe and loved. And for the first time in a month, Richie Tozier slept nightmare free.

## **Notes for the Chapter:**

This chapter was sponsored by my brand new obsession aka Disney+ because I am damn near 40

and also feel like a good time is takeout, booze, and cartoons from my childhood!

Have a great holiday to those who support and for those that don't have a great rest of the week!

**Author's Note:**

Thanks for reading. Hope you enjoyed!